

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Crime, cops, and capitalism:  
a working-class approach

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 72/NO. 5 FEBRUARY 4, 2008

## Washington to send 3,000 marines to Afghanistan

BY RÓGER CALERO

Pentagon officials reported January 9 that Washington is preparing to send at least 3,000 marines to Afghanistan to bolster its offensive against Taliban and allied forces.

The reinforcement troops are to arrive in April, in anticipation of a Taliban offensive this spring, U.S. officials told the media. Some of the troops will be deployed in the southern province of Helmand, a Taliban stronghold and site of recent intense fighting.

Over the past months the U.S. government has been pressing other NATO members who have occupation forces in Afghanistan to provide the extra 7,500 troops requested by the commanding officer on the ground.

“The commander needs more forces there . . . and the allies are not

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## Indiana events press fight for driver’s licenses for immigrants

BY BETSY FARLEY

INDIANAPOLIS, January 19—About 150 workers turned out for a meeting here today to discuss how to respond to recent government moves that threaten immigrant workers in Indiana. The meeting, held at Iglesia de San Patricio (St. Patrick’s Church), was called by the Immigrant Association of Indiana.

“We are here to discuss how to protect our rights in the face of these unjust laws and how we can organize,” Raymundo Reyes, a leader of the association, told those in attendance.

In November the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) sent letters to 206,000 people whose driver’s licenses supposedly did not match a federal Social Security database. The state has set a deadline of January 31 to correct mismatched information such as Social Security numbers or names. Those who

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## Stop deportations! Legalization now!

Socialist presidential candidate tours Chicago, attends Indiana immigrant rights conference



Militant/John Hawkins

SWP presidential candidate Róger Calero campaigns January 18 at mattress factory in Chicago. Calero spoke the next day at immigrant rights conference in Indianapolis.

BY DENNIS RICHTER  
AND BETSY FARLEY

CHICAGO, January 22—“We are here to extend solidarity with immigrant workers,” Róger Calero said before an audience of 150 workers who met in Indianapolis January 19. “In your struggle you are not alone,” he noted, pointing out that the struggle for unconditional legalization of all undocumented workers is in the interests of all working people, U.S.- and foreign-born alike.

The Socialist Workers Party presi-

dential candidate was invited to participate in a day-long conference and evening meeting at the Iglesia de San Patricio (St. Patrick’s Church), called by the Immigrant Association of Indiana. One of the main issues they discussed is a new state law under which thousands of immigrants face losing their driver’s licenses if they don’t provide a valid Social Security number. The other was proposed legislation that would victimize undocumented workers by threatening

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Reuters/Rafiq Maqbool

British troops patrol Musa Qala, Afghanistan, December 15, days after fierce battle by U.S., British, and Afghan troops drove out large Taliban force there. Washington plans to send 3,000 marines to the region to bolster its total force of 27,000 U.S. troops in the country. Some 54,000 NATO troops are stationed in Afghanistan, 14,000 of which are from the United States.

## Consumer prices rise as workers’ real wages decline

Financial institution losses signal deeper crisis

BY PAUL PEDERSON

The U.S. Department of Labor reported in mid-January that consumer prices in 2007 increased by the highest percentage in 17 years, especially for basic necessities. It reported that workers’ wages, after adjusting for inflation, dropped last year. Meanwhile, holiday sales were the lowest they’ve been in five years.

In January, two major capitalist institutions, Citigroup and Merrill Lynch, reported multibillion-dollar losses in the last quarter of last year, an indication of

the broader world financial crisis.

The Labor Department reported 4.1 percent inflation in 2007, but that figure does not tell the real story. Bread prices jumped by nearly twice that rate, 7.4 percent last year. Eggs were up 29.2 percent, milk 13.1 percent, coffee 6.3 percent, chicken 5.8 percent.

The cost of energy leapt by 17.4 percent last year, with gasoline prices up 29.6 percent. Tuition and other college expenses were pushed up by 6.2 percent. And health insurance, already out of

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## Farm bill is boon for wealthy owners, not working farmers

BY FRANK FORRESTAL  
AND ROLLANDE GIRARD

MINNEAPOLIS—The 2007 farm bill, approved by a 79–14 Senate vote in mid-December, is now due to go to a joint Senate-House committee before a final version is sent to President George Bush. Although presented as a benefit to all farmers, the heart of the \$286 billion plan is the expansion of subsidies to the wealthiest farm owners.

The Senate bill includes a \$10 billion increase for the next five years. It increases crop subsidies, creates grants for fruit and vegetable growers, and provides money for biofuel production and “green” payments to farmers, among its many provisions.

The big-business press reports that Bush will veto the bill unless farm subsidies are cut substantially, and that he opposes raising the taxes to cover their costs. Whatever

the final version, farm subsidies will continue to flow to the largest capitalist farmers, as they have for decades.

Debate over the farm bill takes place against a backdrop of rising agricultural commodity prices. Much of

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# Seattle protest: Stop the deportation of Cambodians!

BY CHRIS HOEPPNER

SEATTLE—Ninety people turned out January 7 in front of the Federal Building here to speak out against an impending U.S. government deportation of Cambodian-born immigrants. Speakers included several of those who could be deported to Cambodia if Washington signs repatriation agreements with Vietnam and Laos.

According to the Refugee Justice Project, some 2,000 Cambodian immigrants are now facing deportation, many as a result of the 1996 laws passed by the William Clinton administration. The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act increased the number of offenses for which immigrants could be deported, and limited the discretion of immigration judges to waive deportation. This legislation also made retroactive the expansion of offenses classified as aggravated felonies.

“I was raised by my mother in a housing project in Seattle,” Many Uch told the demonstrators. “In 1994, as a young adult, I committed a crime that landed me in prison. Because of the immigration law passed by Congress in 1996, requiring deportable aliens to remain in detention until deported, and because Cambodia was not accepting deportees back at the time of my release from prison in 1997, I was taken into INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] custody without a release date for two and half years.

“I was paroled only after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that aliens could

not be detained indefinitely. However, the U.S. later signed a treaty with Cambodia allowing for deportation, which means I, along with 2,000 Cambodian Americans, could be deported at any time,” Uch said. “We demand due process. Immigrants and refugees deserve the same rights as a U.S. citizen.”

Chris Hoeppner, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for governor in Washington state, joined the antideportation protest. He told the crowd, “The socialist campaign demands the U.S. government stop the raids and deportations and legalize all immigrants now.”

## Volunteers launch national Pathfinder sales effort

BY GALE SHANGOLD

NEW YORK—Pathfinder sales representatives around the United States began a campaign in early December to

### PATHFINDER AROUND THE WORLD

make 100 visits to bookstores, libraries, and professors by March 31.

Pathfinder representatives are taking advantage of the concentrated effort to show buyers, librarians, and professors three collections of speeches by Thomas Sankara. These are the new edition of *Thomas Sankara Speaks*, as well as *We Are Heirs of the World's Revolutions* and *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle*, two pamphlets that have both recently been published in book form. Sankara led the 1983–87 democratic revolution in the West Afri-

can nation of Burkina Faso.

The Sankara titles are featured on Pathfinder's promotional flyer for Black History Month. So are several other titles, including the new edition of *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution*, by Jack Barnes, and *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*.

“Now is the perfect time to get out Pathfinder books in a more intensified way in time for Black History Month in February and Women's History Month in March,” said Pathfinder sales representative Theresa Kendrick in a phone interview from Miami.

“I have also noticed more interest now in Pathfinder titles such as *Capitalism's World Disorder* and the issues of *New Internationalist* magazine, which explain the roots of the present housing foreclosure crisis and the broader world economic crisis,” she added.

Kendrick reports that sales representatives in Miami have already made six visits out of their goal of 20. Out of these, one buyer opened an account and one made a note to order *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s*, by Frank Kofsky, and *What Is Surrealism?* by André Breton.

“This campaign to make 100 visits helps sales representatives make sure they follow up on all interest in Pathfinder books among buyers, giving them whatever promotional materials and technical assistance they need to



Militant/Cecelia Moriarity (inset)

Immigrant workers, including several facing deportation, and their supporters protested January 7 in front of Seattle's Federal Building against the pending deportation of as many as 2,000 Cambodians.

## THE MILITANT

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Nurses rally September 11 in Sacramento, California, against a state law benefitting insurance companies at workers' expense.

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## The Militant

Vol. 72/No. 5

Closing news date: January 23, 2008

Editor: Olympia Newton

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Published weekly except for one week in January, two weeks in July, and one week in August.

The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018. Telephone: (212) 244-4899 Fax: (212) 244-4947

E-mail: [themilitant@mac.com](mailto:themilitant@mac.com)

Website: [www.themilitant.com](http://www.themilitant.com)

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS: United States:** for one-year send \$35 to above address.

**Latin America, Caribbean:** for one-year subscription send \$65, drawn on a U.S.



# Behind U.S. farm bill

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the increase has been fueled by the ethanol and biodiesel boom, which has pushed up prices of corn, soybeans, and other foods. The recently passed energy bill, which requires refineries to use more and more ethanol, is also contributing to higher prices.

Federal farm legislation has long been marked by billions of dollars in subsidy payments to rich non-farmers and big capitalist farmers. According to the Reuters news agency, “8 percent of grain, cotton, and soybean growers collect 58 percent of the payments.” Even though the price of corn, wheat, cotton, and soybeans are at record highs, these big producers will get the lion’s share of the subsidies. For example, the price of corn went from \$2 to more than \$4 a bushel in the past year. The price of wheat, which was \$3 to \$4 a bushel, shot up to around \$9 during the same period.

## USDA study

A 2005 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) study, “Structure and Finances of U.S. Farms,” reported that “medium-sales farms and large-scale farms received about three-quarters of commodity-related government payments in 2003.” This means farmers with larger sales benefit the most, not the farmers who need help the most. These farmers are forced to rely more and more on off-farm income to survive.

The report also said, “Average operating profit margins and average rates of return on assets and equity are negative for small farms, but positive for large, very large, and nonfamily farms,” said the report. Farm subsidy programs contribute to farm consolidation and higher land prices, making it more difficult for working farmers to stay on the land, and even more difficult for younger farmers to begin farming.

The demand for corn to produce ethanol has led to inflated food prices. Corn serves as the main feed for meat, poultry, dairy, and egg production, and for an array of processed foods.

The current prices of crops, along with federal subsidies and incentives for corn-based energy, have motivated farmers to plant more corn. The *Washington Post* reported December 12 that “since 2000, the share of the U.S. corn crop devoted to ethanol production has jumped from about 6 percent to about 25 percent.”

Producers of gasoline receive a 51-cent tax credit on every gallon of ethanol they mix with their gaso-

line. The government paid out more than \$500 million to ethanol refiners between 2001 and 2006. What’s more, the new energy bill calls for doubling the federal requirement of ethanol use.

## ‘Critical food shortages’

Higher food costs are hitting the semicolonial world with a vengeance. For example, the biofuel boom and rapacious U.S. farm policies caused a spike in tortilla prices in Mexico, which was met with large street protests in early 2007. A UN report said that “the cost of imported food for the world’s poorest countries has risen by 25 percent.” Some 40 countries face “critical food shortages,” the report added.

The price of U.S. farmland is up, too. In Iowa farmland values have risen 22 percent in the past year to an average of \$3,908 an acre, the largest one-year increase since 1976. Nationally, farmland prices have skyrocketed 50 percent over the past three years, to an average of close to \$2,200 an acre, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Iowa State University economist Michael Duffy said ethanol production would be strong for years, telling the *Des Moines Register*, “I don’t see anything that can cause a downturn.” Others are not so sure. Many farmers in the upper Midwest remember previous bubbles, like the one in the early 1980s. When it burst, farmland prices fell through the floor, driving tens of thousands of working farmers off the land.

## Cost of renting land soars

Higher land prices may help those who own land, but not those who rent it, such as Randy Jasper, a grain farmer in Wisconsin. Jasper said in an interview that “the good land I rent has doubled from \$100 to \$200 an acre, while the poor ground, which is less productive, has tripled in price from \$40 to \$120 per acre.” Jasper rents most of his 2,000 acres of land.

With higher prices for fuel, fertilizer, and seeds, the overall cost of farming almost doubled in the last five years, he said. “The farm bill represents no change. The big farmers get most of the subsidies and big corporate farmers get around the subsidy limits.”

George Naylor, president of the National Family Farm Coalition, noted in a December 11 interview on National Public Radio that he received \$6,000 last year in farm subsidies. Naylor is a corn and soybean farmer in Iowa. In 2005 he received \$23,000, which was more than half his income.

“The cost of farming doubled in the last five years,” Naylor said. To get by, he, like many working farmers, has to rely on off-farm income to make ends meet.

Like Jasper, Naylor says increasing numbers of farmers are forced to rent their land, often from several landlords. Beside higher fuel costs, farmers like himself are also being squeezed by higher prices for farm inputs—everything from fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds to storage and crop insurance.



Corn harvest in Iowa in 2007. Farm bill will benefit capitalist farmers the most, while working farmers will be forced to rely more and more on off-farm income to survive.

There is little to gain for working farmers from the farm bill. The reality is that more and more farmers continue to be forced off the land. The *Des Moines Register* recently reported that there were 99,000 Iowa farms in 1996. In 2006 the total had fallen to 88,600—a loss of more than 10,000 farms.

*Frank Forrestal is the Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress in Iowa’s 3rd District. Rolande Girard is the Socialist Workers candidate for State Representative in Minnesota’s District 61B.*

*Carlos Samaniego contributed to this article.*

## Polisario Front, Moroccan gov’t negotiate status of W. Sahara

BY ANNALUCIA VERMUNT

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—The Polisario Front, which has led a decades-long struggle for the independence of the Western Sahara, held a third round of United Nations-sponsored talks with the Moroccan government January 7–9. They agreed to resume negotiations in March.

Mhamed Khadad, spokesperson for the Polisario Front, said the talks have registered the “slow death of the autonomy project proposed by Morocco.”

The Western Sahara, previously a colony of imperialist Spain, was occupied by Moroccan troops after Spanish forces withdrew in the 1970s in face of a growing independence struggle by the Saharawi people. The Polisario Front led a war for independence until 1991, when it signed a cease-fire with the Moroccan government.

The Polisario Front organizes a government in exile in southwest Algeria, where some 170,000 Saharawis live in camps, preparing for the return to their land.

The Moroccan monarchy has refused to acknowledge the Saharawis’ right to national self-determination. After little progress toward a UN-sponsored referendum on the status of Western Sahara, two rounds of direct UN-sponsored negotiations were held in 2007.

The Polisario Front calls for a “democratic vote by the people of Western Sahara,” Khadad said. “If the Saharawis vote tomorrow for integration or autonomy, we will respect the free will expressed by them. Nevertheless, we are convinced that they will vote for independence.”

This was the first round of talks

since the Polisario Front held its 12th congress on December 14–20. The congress was extended by two days as delegates debated the future course of the national liberation struggle and elected their leadership. Central to the debate was the progress towards a political solution and the place of the armed struggle.

Mohamed Abdelaziz, secretary general of the Polisario Front and president of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, told the Algerian Press Service December 23, “The priority is the peaceful solution and the negotiations, but these talks must be limited in time.”

He added, “We will resume the armed struggle once we are convinced that there is no progress, that Morocco doesn’t want a peaceful solution and that the UN failed to carry out the decolonization process in Western Sahara.”

Speaking at the opening of the Polisario congress, Abdelaziz emphasized that the struggle being waged in the Moroccan-occupied territories “gave an impetus to the national struggle, galvanized national and international opinion, and changed realities on the ground. It has foiled the opponent’s plans to subsume the Saharawis, and demonstrated to the world that the conflict is between the entire Saharawi people on the one hand and the Moroccan regime, on the other.”

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# Georgia: young socialists campaign for SWP ticket

*This column is written and edited by members of the Young Socialists, a revolutionary socialist youth organization. For more information contact the YS at 306 W. 37th St., 10th Floor, New York, NY 10018; tel. (212) 629-6649; e-mail: youngsocialists@mac.com.*

## YOUNG SOCIALISTS IN ACTION

BY EDDIE BECK

CARROLLTON, Georgia, January 21—"We're not about voting our way to change. We're about working people fighting our way to change," said Loretta VanPelt at a January 11 campaign event here to announce the statewide Socialist Workers Party ticket. VanPelt, 27, is running for U.S. Congress in Georgia's 3rd Congressional District. She is active in Young Socialists for Calero and Kennedy.

"Our campaign supports all struggles by workers to unionize," said VanPelt. "Unions are the main tool workers have to defend ourselves against the bosses' attacks on our working and living conditions." She explained that above all, "working people need our own political party—a labor party based on fighting unions, to contest in the political arena against the Democrats, Republicans, and all other capitalist parties."

The Young Socialists for Calero and Kennedy in Georgia has joined the SWP candidates at actions to present a working-class alternative to the twin parties of capitalism. They are using the socialist election platform to engage working people and youth in discussions on the major issues being debated by all the presidential candidates in the 2008 election campaign, from the economy to immigration to Washington's war policies.

They are explaining the need to build a mass revolutionary movement in this country to take power from the capitalists and establish a workers and farmers government.

Over the past weekend, young campaigners for the SWP ticket participated with hundreds of others in the Georgia Progressive Summit held in Atlanta. Supporters of the socialist campaign joined in discussions on the fight to abolish the death penalty, opposition to the imperialist wars, building a fighting labor movement, and more.

"Workers can show their power when we organize to use union power and take ownership of our struggles, and extend solidarity to other working people engaged in struggle," said Eddie Beck, who is active in Young Socialists for Calero and Kennedy, at a workshop on the labor movement today.

Beck pointed to the massive demonstrations over the past two years for the immediate legalization of all undocumented workers as an example of workers organizing independently of the capitalists and showing their collective power in the face of assaults from the employer class.

Young socialists for the SWP ticket participated with hundreds of others in the Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade here today. They campaigned for the perspective of forging a labor party. They argued for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. and "coalition" troops from Iraq, Afghanistan, and all other theaters in Washing-

ton's "war on terror."

They also joined the candidates in calling for defending and extending affirmative action in employment, education, and housing, won through decades of struggle by working people.

On January 20, at a restaurant where socialist campaigners were meeting to make signs for the Martin Luther King Day march, one worker told the SWP campaigners "That's right!" and took campaign literature to distribute to his coworkers.

If you want to get involved with other young supporters of the Socialist Workers candidates to bring the socialist campaign to working people and youth, join us! See the contact information above or the directory on page 6 or contact the Young Socialists for Calero and Kennedy at ys4calero-kennedy@mac.com.

## A working-class approach to crime, cops, and capitalist 'anticrime' campaigns

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—One issue Democratic and Republican candidates use to try to drum up votes is "the fight against crime." Whether crime rates are up or down, capitalist politicians try to convince us that they are the best ones to address the problem, and that the solution is more cops and more jailings. That these appeals get a hearing from working people shouldn't be underestimated by those who want to end the economic and social system that breeds the conditions for crime.

### AS I SEE IT

Here in Washington, D.C., homicides declined steadily from a high of 262 in 2002 to 169 in 2006. Last year they spiked upward to 181. The increase led politicians on the city council to upstage each other in grilling police chief Cathy Lanier as to what the department was doing wrong.

"The Police's Excellent Year" trumpeted a *New York Times* editorial at the end of 2007. "The nation's largest city is among the safest," it stated, noting that homicides in New York in 2007 dropped below 500, the lowest number ever recorded. By contrast, more than 4,000 murders occurred in the city in 1990–1991.

Nationwide, both violent crimes and property theft and damages fell substantially from 1993 to 2005, according to the federal National Crime Victimization Survey. They are at the lowest level since the data began to be recorded in 1973.

Workers obviously support the decline in murder rates. They hate the petty muggers and gangs who prey on them.

The Socialist Workers Party candidates explain that the role of the police is to protect the wealthy ruling class and its property. This rings true to many workers who have been on strike and had their picket lines attacked by the cops. Or to those who have been stopped, harassed, abused, or jailed while going to work, shopping, or out for an evening of entertainment.

The capitalist rulers' "anticrime" cam-



Militant/Bill Arth

Loretta VanPelt, left, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in the 3rd Congressional District, with campaign supporters Ilsa Hernández and Celestino Ponce at January 21 Martin Luther King Day march in Carrollton, Georgia.

paign means workers, especially those who are Black and Latino, getting shot by killer cops. It means more working people thrown in jail and given longer sentences—today more than 2 million are locked up nationwide. It means the chipping away of constitutional rights such as the presumption of innocence and due process.

#### Police can't be reformed

Class-conscious workers don't advocate "improving" the police through "sensitivity training" or by hiring more Black cops or "community" cops. The police are a repressive institution of the capitalist state and can't be reformed into something different. Cops are not workers—they voluntarily accept their role as enforcers of capitalist rule, and in doing so become declassed and stripped of human solidarity.

But what do socialists say about crime?

In 1844–45 a young Frederick Engels, cofounder with Karl Marx of the modern communist movement, wrote down his observations about the impact of the manufacturing system on workers in England, the leading capitalist country at the time. In *The Condition of the Working Class in England* he cited examples of the violence of everyday life in capitalist society, where "every one stands for himself, and fights for himself against all comers."

"This war of each against all," he wrote, "need cause us no surprise, for it is only the logical sequel of the principle involved in free competition."

Engels explained that the dog-eat-dog values and alienation bred by capitalism are the source of crime. To finally rid the world of crime, working people must organize to rid the world of the criminal system that produces it, capitalism.

The biggest thieves and murderers, of course, are the super-rich propertied classes who expropriate the wealth created by the labor of workers and farmers around the world. Their system also breeds small-time criminals, those who have lost any sense of solidarity and prey on people on a smaller scale.

In countries where capitalism has been overturned, revolutionary leaderships have had to confront the problem

of crime. In *Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War, 1956–58*, Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara described how the leadership of Cuba's Rebel Army, led by Fidel Castro, brought criminal elements to justice, executing those who tortured, raped, and murdered peasants.

They took harsh measures to prevent petty thieves and cattle-rustlers from becoming mixed up with the Rebel Army. No abuse of the peasants or theft of their animals or crops was tolerated. These measures had deep popular support.

After the 1959 victory of the revolution, workers and farmers mobilized in their millions to transform society, carrying out a literacy campaign, land reform, and the nationalization of capitalist industry, banking, and agriculture. The capitalists' army, police, and extralegal thugs were dismantled and replaced by a new state based on workers power.

#### Cuba marked by solidarity

Cuban working people organized themselves into trade unions, neighborhood committees, and popular militias. They defended themselves against counterrevolutionary attacks, stopped petty criminals, and combated corruption. Cuba's revolutionary police have been part of these struggles, such as the heroic role they played in the defeat of the 1961 U.S.-backed mercenary invasion at the Bay of Pigs. The Cuban Revolution has been marked by the prevalence of solidarity and combating the predatory, antisocial values of capitalism.

That's what a workers and farmers government will begin to do and what a socialist revolution can accomplish. To end crime, working people need to put an end to the criminal system of exploitation.

That means building a revolutionary movement of working people that can take on the ruling rich, their cops, and courts, and win. That's what the Socialist Workers campaign is about.

*Sam Manuel is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for city council at-large in Washington, D.C.*

## ON THE PICKET LINE

### Agency in Puerto Rico decertifies teachers union

The Labor Relations Commission of Puerto Rico decertified the Teachers Federation of Puerto Rico (FMPR) on January 8 after its members voted to authorize a strike.

The commission, an agency of the U.S. colonial government in that island nation, said when union delegates held a strike vote last November, the federation violated labor rules that prohibit public employees from striking.

The commission also demanded that the union provide a list of the more than 1,000 delegates who participated in the vote. It banned the current union leadership from representing the 42,000 teachers in the FMPR for the next five years.

The decertification has effectively ended contract negotiations between the union and the government. The Education Department said teachers will have to elect another representative to take part in contract negotiations, which could push the signing of a contract to 2009. Teachers have been working without a contract since 2006.

Among the demands of the union are an 18 per cent wage increase, lowering to 15 the number of students per classroom, and improvements to school facilities.

—Róger Calero

### Health-care workers strike in New Zealand

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand—Caregivers, nurses, and their supporters picketed January 10 outside Brackenridge Estate, a home for the mentally and physically impaired here, as part of a two-day strike for higher wages and better conditions. Workers held hand-made placards and gave out flyers to a small number of strikebreakers, urging them not to cross the picket line.

Organized by the New Zealand Nurses Organization (NZNO) and the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE), the 140 union members at Brackenridge rejected a wage offer that was tied to cuts in training, maintenance, and weekend outings for residents. NZNO organizer Steve Howard said that



Militant/Ruth Gray

Picket line of caregivers and nurses in Christchurch, New Zealand, who struck for higher pay and better conditions at Brackenridge Estate home.

“Workers were offended by this offer.”

NUPE has been in negotiations since September, and has called on the health ministry to increase funding to ensure patients receive adequate care. The union is also

demanding overtime pay and improved pay for weekend shifts.

“It’s a hard job and we just ask for compensation for the hard work we do,” said union delegate Wendy Johnston.

—Ruth Gray

## U.S. to send 3,000 additional troops to Afghanistan

Continued from front page

inclined to provide them, so we are looking at providing additional combat forces,” said Pentagon spokesperson Geoff Morrell, according to the *Washington Post*.

There are currently 27,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan. Some 14,000 are part of the 54,000 NATO-led occupation troops. Another 13,000

U.S. troops are operating there separately under the name Operation Enduring Freedom.

The military success of the U.S.-led offensive in Iraq has generated discussion among commanders and White House officials on the pace of the U.S. troop “drawdown” in Iraq and the increase in troop levels in Afghanistan.

“We do what we can in Afghanistan; we do what we must in Iraq,” said an unnamed official of the Joint Chiefs of Staff quoted by the American Forces Press Service.

The Pentagon has shelved for the moment a proposal by Marine Corps Commandant James Conway to shift all marine combat operations from Iraq to Afghanistan, and give the marines primary responsibility for the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan, the Reuters news

agency reported. Conway argued that the marines were better suited for counterinsurgency fighting in Afghanistan than for carrying out long-term security operations in Iraq.

The proposal has met opposition by military commanders who favor continuing to rely on joint operations involving all branches of the military.

Meanwhile, heavy fighting has continued on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Some 300 Taliban and al-Qaeda troops attacked a Pakistani military base near the Afghan border on January 9, Pakistani officials told the press. The assault was reportedly pushed back.

The mountainous border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan is where Osama bin-Laden and oth-

er al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders are reportedly located. It has become a front line in Washington’s “war on terror.” The area has been a staging ground for attacks on the occupation forces in Afghanistan. More than 80 percent of suicide bombers in Afghanistan are recruited and trained in the region, according to a 2007 United Nations report.

Two Dutch soldiers in Afghanistan were killed January 12 in a firefight with Islamist militias during an operation involving several hundred Dutch and Afghan government soldiers in an area where numerous small groups of Taliban combatants are known to be hiding, reported the *International Herald Tribune*. There are currently 1,650 Dutch troops in the southern Afghan province of Uruzgan as part of the NATO forces there.

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## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



February 4, 1983

Sixteen hundred U.S. military personnel will be sent to Honduras during the first week of February, the Pentagon announced January 18. They will assist some 5,000 Honduran troops in carrying out a major military provocation near the border with Nicaragua.

These “joint maneuvers”—of a scale unprecedented in Central America—represent a further escalation of the Reagan administration’s counterrevolutionary war against the Nicaraguan people.

American workers have no interest whatsoever in Washington’s mounting attacks on the people of Nicaragua. They are fellow toilers whose only crime has been to overthrow the U.S.-backed Somoza dictatorship and install a government that puts the needs of workers and farmers above all other considerations.



February 3, 1958

The heroic revolutionary action of the people of Venezuela has toppled the regime of Marcos Perez Jimenez, U.S. imperialism’s favorite Latin American dictator.

Huge throngs of demonstrators entered Caracas’ downtown Plaza Silencio with shouts of “Down With Tyranny.” Fighting spread throughout the capital and casualties were especially heavy in the Catia section, a working-class district.

On the second day of the fighting army units began to join the revolutionists. The Venezuelans besieged the presidential palace and central police headquarters.

Within a few hours the dictator was on a plane en route to exile in the Dominican Republic, the bailiwick of his fellow tyrant, Trujillo.



February 4, 1933

President von Hindenburg, the victorious candidate of the socialist “Iron Front,” the “bulwark of the Republic against Fascism,” has finally appointed Hitler to the Chancellorship of the Reich.

The fact that Hindenburg, who was undoubtedly hostile to Hitler, even if not in a fundamentally class sense, finally called upon the Fascist leader to take over the government, is eloquent testimony to the desperation of the German bourgeoisie.

It is entirely unthinkable that the German working class, millions strong, trained in the school of the class struggle for years, having at its head the most powerful Communist party in the world outside of the Soviet Union, will permit the Nazi assassins to remain in power without a violent struggle.



# The trade unions and building a revolutionary party

*Below is an excerpt from The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions. The Spanish translation of this title is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for January. Much in the pages of this book was discussed and adopted by conventions and leadership meetings of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States. It shows why the industrial workers and their primary defensive organization, the trade unions, have the potential to be the most powerful battalions of the working class, and why this is true around the globe. Jack Barnes is national secretary of the SWP. Copyright © Pathfinder Press 1981. Reprinted by permission.*

BY JACK BARNES

During the quarter century of relative economic expansion and stability

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

following the post-World War II labor upsurge, social conflicts were widely viewed solely in terms of conflicts between the “haves” and “have nots,” or between Blacks and whites.

Today these social conflicts can more easily be seen as expressions of the fundamental class struggle between capital and labor—between the exploited producers and those who exploit them.



Militant / Sylvia Hansen

**Strikers rally October 5 at Prudential Overall Supply plant at Vista, California, to press their fight for union representation by UNITE HERE. As capitalist offensive bears down, “more rank-and-file workers become combative and more politically class conscious,” says Barnes.**

Social and political struggles have a more direct and rapid reflection within the labor movement. A broader layer of workers understand that solidarity with farmers’ struggles, Black rights, women’s rights, and fights against U.S. military intervention abroad are labor issues. These issues should be raised in the unions for action, not just talk.

The ruling-class offensive—carried out both by the employers directly and by their government—will result in a growing tendency for the irreconcilable conflict between the capitalists and working people to find expression more openly in political life and for the unions to be drawn into involvement in these struggles.

Class polarization gives an impulse to the radicalization of the most combative workers. At the same time, it emboldens rightists to make probes, to become more “radical” themselves. Wind is put in the sails of proponents of right-wing views on such issues as Black rights, women’s equality, the rights of unions, the rights of immigrants, government social programs, and military intervention by imperialism abroad. Their reactionary propaganda falls on particularly receptive ears among the tens of millions in the middle-class and professional layers who directly benefit from the current policies of the government

and big business. For these layers, which have been substantially increased by the recent evolution of the structure of the economy, 1975–85 has not been a bad decade; their economic position has significantly improved.

There is also a growing ideological differentiation among working people—workers and farmers alike. More rank-and-file workers become combative and more politically class conscious, in spite of the trade union officialdom’s failure to chart any class-struggle way forward.

But a minority, especially among the relatively privileged layers, the aristocracy of labor, are misled into thinking that various rightist solutions offer a way out for themselves and the section of the working class with which they identify. They look toward collaboration with the capitalist class as it pursues its goals at home and abroad, rather than toward class struggle as the way forward. Those workers who respond to the pressures of the capitalist offensive in this way identify more firmly with the interests of “their” country, “their” industry, “their” company. They become even more susceptible to the ideological weapons that the rulers use, especially all the varieties of national-chauvinist, racist, anti-woman prejudices, and other reactionary ideas that cover up opposing class interests. A similar political differentiation has begun to grow among

working farmers.

An essential part of the strategic line of march toward the establishment of a workers and farmers government in the United States is the fight for the transformation of the industrial unions—the most powerful existing organizations of the working class—into revolutionary instruments of class struggle for the interests of the exploited and oppressed.

During the long postwar period of capitalist expansion, political conditions in the United States stood in the way of effective revolutionary work by socialists in the industrial unions. The political and economic situation that opened in the mid-1970s made it possible once again for communists to advance this fight from within the industrial unions. This dictated a sharp turn. The SWP decided to get a large and stable majority of its members into the industrial unions and to build national fractions of its members in these unions.

Without such a turn to the industrial unions a retreat from the struggle for a proletarian party would have been unavoidable. The party’s internationalism, its political homogeneity and centralization, and its revolutionary centralist character would have been eroded. The working-class composition of its milieu, its membership, and its leadership would have been diluted instead of strengthened. It would have become more white and anglo. There would have been even greater pressure on party members who are female to retreat from the demands of political leadership and lose their political self-confidence. The party would have been more susceptible to the pressures of a growing economic and social crisis and war preparations—pressures originating in the bourgeoisie and transmitted through various petty-bourgeois layers and organizations. It would have been more vulnerable to cliquism and permanent factionalism, and therefore less democratic. If a revolutionary proletarian party does not base its membership in the industrial working class and industrial unions when it is politically possible to do so, this inevitably results in the erosion of its program.

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# Legalization of all immigrants now!

Recently, several states have adopted measures whose goal is to intimidate workers without documents and push back the movement for legalization. But from Arizona to Indiana, immigrant workers are resisting.

Attacks on immigrants are aimed at maintaining a permanent category of workers with fewer rights who are more vulnerable to superexploitation. The bosses' goal is to push down the wages, conditions, and confidence of the entire working class—U.S.- and foreign-born.

In Michigan, a new policy went into effect January 22 that bars people without permanent residency from obtaining driver's licenses, even if they are living in the United States legally. In Indiana, the Bureau of Motor Vehicles has sent letters to 206,000 people whose licenses supposedly do not match their Social Security numbers.

Connecting driver's licenses to Social Security numbers is a good example of how the government's offensive against immigrants is aimed at the entire working class. Increasingly, state and federal governments are taking steps toward establishing a national ID. As in other capitalist countries, a national ID

card would make it easier for cops to track militant workers. It would help employers create blacklists of "troublemakers"—with or without legal papers.

But immigrant workers and their supporters are responding to these and other attempts to intimidate a layer of our class. Some 650 people gathered in Houston January 18–20 for an immigrant rights conference. A January 19 meeting in Indianapolis brought together 150 workers to organize against attacks on immigrants in that state. Immigrant workers and their supporters rallied in Seattle January 7 against pending deportations of 2,000 Cambodians. Already, activists are preparing for May 1, a date that millions of workers now identify as a day to register support for legalization by calling off work and marching in the streets.

This response illustrates the confidence that marks the immigrant rights struggle today. As one immigrant worker in Phoenix, Arizona, put it, "They say they're going to build a big fence—well, we're going to build an even bigger ladder."

Such confidence is a strength for the entire labor movement. The unions should throw their weight behind the fight for legalization, with no conditions.

# Dakota Premium workers rally to defend union

BY CARLOS SAMANIEGO

SOUTH ST. PAUL, Minnesota—About 30 unionists and their supporters held signs saying "Vote Sí" (Vote Yes) and "Union = Strength" as they greeted workers coming off the job at the Dakota Premium Foods meatpacking plant here January 17. The action was part of the efforts by unionists in the plant to defeat a company-backed union decertification election scheduled for January 25.

The plant-gate action was joined by some of the workers coming off their shifts. Together with fellow members and officials of the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW) Local 789, they handed out the latest issue of the *Workers' Voice*, the pro-union newsletter put out by workers at Dakota Premium.

Argelia Flores Díaz, who works on the kill side of the plant, said that many workers "are really happy with what the union is doing now," referring to the flyering at the plant gate and the visits by union representatives to the plant. "The union makes you strong, and the more people the better," she said. "I would like to be outside like this but I am one of the last workers to get out."

Despite the bitter cold, the big majority of workers stopped and rolled down their windows to get the *Workers' Voice*. Some pulled over and talked to the union supporters. A few others demonstratively zipped through the crowd without taking a leaflet or looking at anyone.

Headlined "Vote Yes! Sí se puede! Yes we can!" the new *Workers' Voice* responded to a company meeting held the day before.

The newsletter said that at the meeting, plant manager Steve Cortinas "disrespected all the workers at Dakota Premium when he cut off those of us in the boning [department] who tried to answer his anti-union distortions." Noting that Cortinas said the company "couldn't guarantee raises," the newsletter answered, "Yes, that's because the only way to guarantee raises is to have a union and win a contract that forces the company to regularly increase our pay."

With the union, the pro-union bulletin said, workers can fight for the right "to have union representation whenever we are disciplined; regular weekly visits by union officials to help control the line speed; better health benefits," and other rights.

It added, "Don't be fooled or bullied by Dakota management. By voting YES for the union we will send a strong message that we won't be disrespected and we will fight for better wages, better job conditions and dignity on the job."

At the break after the company meeting, some workers spoke out to explain the necessity to fight for the union and for a better contract. Samuel Farley, a shop steward, spoke to the crowd in English and another worker translated his remarks into Spanish. The steward invited everyone to come to the union hall for a meeting after work the next day.

Two days later, a pro-company leaflet was distributed at the plant. It asserted that the union contract was "garbage" and that the company offers things that are not in the contract, like "meat sales at a lower price for the employees" and a loan program for workers who can't make ends meet.

Pro-union workers put out the third *Workers' Voice* in a little over a week to answer the company attacks. In the issue, they reproduced part of a UFCW statement reporting on the January 16 victory by meat-packers at Colorado Premium, in Greeley, Colorado, who won an election to be organized by UFCW Local 7. The workers there organized to seek "protection from dangerously fast line speeds and access to bathroom breaks," the union noted.

*Carlos Samaniego is a member of UFCW Local 789 and works at Dakota Premium Foods. Rebecca Williamson, a trimmer at Dakota Premium and member of Local 789, contributed to this article.*

# New edition of 'Malcolm X Speaks' available

BY CINDY JAQUITH

A new cloth edition of *Malcolm X Speaks*, published by Pathfinder, has just come off the press.

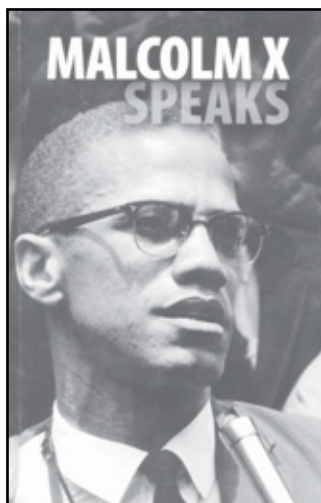
The book is a selection of speeches and statements by one of the most outstanding revolutionary leaders produced by the working class in the United States. Malcolm's starting point was, "The system in this country cannot produce freedom for an Afro-American. It is impossible for this system, this economic system, this political system, this social system, this system, period."

Most of the speeches in the book were given during the last year of Malcolm's life. One speech, "Message to the grass roots," was given in November 1963, shortly before he broke from the Nation of Islam.

*Malcolm X Speaks* was first published a few months after he was assassinated in New York in February 1965. The book has been out of stock for several years.

Other speeches and writings in the book include, "The ballot or the bullet," "Letters from abroad," "To Mississippi youth," and three speeches given at meetings sponsored by the Militant Labor Forum in New York including "The black revolution" and "Prospects for freedom in 1965."

The new edition has larger, more readable type, a new cover, and new ads. It costs \$20. Orders can be placed with distributors listed on page 6 or through [www.pathfinderpress.com](http://www.pathfinderpress.com).



# LETTERS

**Ted Klitzke, 92**

Ted Klitzke, a friend of the Pathfinder bookstore and Socialist Workers Party in Baltimore, died Jan. 6 of complications from a stroke. He was 92.

He was a former dean of the Maryland Institute College of Art, and for many years attended Militant Labor Forums, sometimes with his wife Margaret.

Klitzke opened his home to fund-raising affairs, and he housed visiting militants from South Africa and elsewhere.

Ted and Margaret, who died in 1990, were associated with progressive causes throughout their lives and he marched in Selma, Ala., in 1965 with the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

*Baxter Smith*

*Baltimore, Maryland*

I remember representatives of the L.A. 8 coming to the organization's meetings to distribute information about the Palestinian struggle for national self-determination and to win support in their just fight against deportation. They would stay for the entire business meeting and subsequently participated in several picket lines and marches organized by the Free South Africa Movement.

(One can see the obvious connection between the former apartheid regime in South Africa and the Zionist government in Israel.)

Again, congratulations for a hard-fought battle to the L.A. 8. The struggle continues.

*Glova Scott*

*Washington, D.C.*

**What about price of milk?**

If high gas prices are caused by globalization then why is milk \$4.99 a gallon? The major news networks are always talking about the price of a barrel of oil and the price of gas at the pump, but there is no mention of the price working people pay for basic food staples such as milk. Last time I checked here in Atlanta, milk at the local

supermarket cost \$4.99.

This is a clear example of how the current military conflict is larger than Halliburton, the Bush family, and oil profits as has been professed by some liberals and conspiracy theorists. The price of milk and the current war are two parts of something much larger, capitalism entering a period of decline.

Capitalism in its final epoch, imperialism, is responsible, not a new phenomenon called globalization, not the illuminati, or the hand of god, but the action of a ruling class whose means of existence has entered a sharp decline and eventual collapse. Only the working class organized to fight the employing class for state power can divert the skyrocketing price of food and bring an end to the current war.

*Wesley Lewis*

*Atlanta, Georgia*

**The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.**

**Congratulations to 'L.A. 8'**

I was greatly gratified to read the article in the December 3, 2007 *Militant* announcing the defeat of the deportation case against the Los Angeles 8.

While residing in Los Angeles many years ago and active in the Free South Africa Movement there,



# Indiana legalization fight

## Continued from front page

do not provide the information will lose their licenses.

A BMV official told the media that 24 percent of the letters were sent to people who had driver's licenses but no Social Security number on file. At least 50,000 undocumented Latin American immigrants live in Indiana, according to the Pew Hispanic Center.

A state anti-immigrant bill has been proposed by Sen. Mike Delph with bipartisan support. It would require employers to use the federal government's E-Verify system when hiring workers. Employers found guilty of hiring workers lacking proper papers would be placed on three years' probation. If they hired undocumented workers again during that period, they would lose their business license.

The legislation would also make it a misdemeanor for anyone to transport, conceal, or harbor an undocumented worker; a second such offense would be a felony. It would require state police to train local cops "to target illegal im-

migrants in communities determined as 'problem areas,'" the Indianapolis *Star* reported.

The organizing meeting here mapped plans for a protest at the state capitol January 23, when hearings on the bill are scheduled.

"We have to reach out to allies like African Americans who have decades of experience fighting discrimination," said Jorge Aguilar, a leader of the Immigrant Association. Aguilar urged participation in the January 21 Martin Luther King Day activities here in Indianapolis.

## Midwest immigrant rights meeting

Earlier in the day, 35 immigrant rights activists from Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Ohio participated in a Midwest meeting, also called by the Immigrant Association of Indiana.

Representatives came from a range of organizations, including the Farm Labor Organizing Committee from Toledo, Chicago Workers Collaborative, and the Mexican Civic Association of Indiana.

"Winning amnesty is the first step,"



Militant/Jorge Lertora

January 19 meeting at Iglesia de San Patricio in Indianapolis, called by the Immigrant Association of Indiana, discussed how to respond to attacks on the right to driver's licenses.

said Alberto Martínez, a construction worker from Madison, Wisconsin. "Whether legal or illegal, workers can't survive with the wages we get. The struggle by immigrants doesn't end with legalization."

Martínez said he has been working two jobs since he was laid off from his job as a result of the slowdown in the

construction industry.

Róger Calero, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president, spoke at a session on the role of the unions and the churches in the immigrant rights movement. "The struggle for legalization is intertwined with the struggles for wages, benefits, and better working conditions. Legalization is a demand that is in the interests of the working class as a whole," said Calero.

He noted that immigrant workers have taken part in strikes and organizing drives shoulder to shoulder with other workers, strengthening the unity and fighting capacity of the working class.

Olga Bautista, of the Southeast Chicago Community for Immigrant Rights, described how her group organized 2,000 people to join last year's large May Day march in Chicago. Jesusa Rodríguez, from St. Adalbert Church in South Bend, Indiana, reported that a group of 35 to 50 people have begun meeting every week after church to organize to oppose the attacks on immigrants in Indiana.

The conference called for a May 1 Midwest regional demonstration for legalization of all immigrants, to be held in Chicago.

## Arizona: workers protest anti-immigrant attacks

BY MIKE ORTEGA  
AND DEAN HAZLEWOOD

PHOENIX, Arizona, January 20—In December and early January there were regular protests here by immigrant workers and counterprotests by rightist groups in front of a furniture store that hired off-duty cops as security guards to intimidate day laborers gathering in the parking lot to seek work.

The confrontations took place as a new state immigration law came into effect here, becoming a focal point in the national debate on immigration policy. The legislation imposes sanctions on employers who "knowingly" hire undocumented workers.

Defenders of immigrant rights have held weekly protests in front of Pruitt's furniture store in East Phoenix calling on the owners to stop hiring off-duty sheriff's deputies as security guards. The cops patrol the store's parking lot and turn over immigrant day laborers to federal Homeland Security police.

At the same time, ultrarightist groups like Riders United for a Sovereign America and the Minutemen Defense Corps have held counterprotests.

In early January, the store's owners agreed to stop hiring the deputies while protest organizer Salvador Reza agreed to move the rallies in defense of the day laborers to the other side of the road. Sheriff Joseph Arpaio, however, said he intended to continue having his deputies patrol the area to arrest undocumented workers and turn them over to immigration police.

On a January 19–20 visit here, *Militant* reporters spoke with several day laborers at a Wal-Mart parking lot just a few blocks up the road from Pruitt's. Nearby, a group of rightists stood with a sign declaring, "Way to go Sheriff Joe."

One of the workers, Julio, who asked that his last name not be published, said the immigrant rights demonstrators received support from workers and local merchants who donated food to the pickets.

While the sheriff's deputies were around, Julio said, "they arrested around

50 people and had them deported. It did no good, though, since most of the deported are back now." He remarked, "They say they're going to build a big fence—well, we are going to build an even bigger ladder."

In response to threats by rightist demonstrators, Reza closed the Macehualli Work Center, a day laborer hiring site he operated in north Phoenix. He promised to take the day laborers instead to a nearby Home Depot. A group of rightists stood outside the center January 19 with cameras and placards that said "Yes, we have your registration number."

The threatening slogan referred to the new state law that came into effect in January. The Legal Arizona Workers Act

requires employers to screen new hires against a federal database, E-Verify, that checks a worker's Social Security number and eligibility to work in the United States. Employers who "knowingly" hire undocumented workers are penalized, first with a 10-day suspension of their business license, and after a second offense with the loss of their license.

This law is the latest in a series of anti-immigrant legislation in this state and is being debated both within Arizona and nationally. Some capitalist politicians have criticized aspects of the legislation as too unwieldy for employers.

Under a deal reached January 16 in a federal court reviewing the law, enforcement of the employer sanctions has been held off until March.

## Sri Lanka gov't renews offensive against Tamil Tigers

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—The Sri Lankan military began a major offensive January 16 against the armed opposition forces of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, formally ending a six-year-old cease-fire.

Along with military action, Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa said the government will make new proposals for a limited autonomy for the Tamils in the northern part of the island nation. The goal is to isolate the guerrillas from their base of support among the Tamil minority, the government said.

Both Pakistan and India, in competing to extend their influence in the region, have provided military aid to the Sri Lankan government. The U.S. government also aids the regime as part of its "global war on terrorism."

Tamils make up 18 percent of Sri Lanka's population, while 74 percent are Sinhalese. In the colonial administration under British rule, the Tamils were given jobs over the Sinhalese. At the same time, the British rulers brought Tamils from their colony in India to work as virtual slaves on tea plantations that previously belonged to Sinhalese peasants. These moves fostered divisions among working people and helped maintain co-

lonial rule.

After the independence of Sri Lanka (previously Ceylon), successive Sinhalese-dominated governments passed laws to institutionalize the national oppression of the Tamil people, including the denial of language rights and discrimination in employment and university admissions. In 1983 a civil war broke out between the government and the Tamil Tigers.

Although the Sri Lankan government only officially withdrew from the cease-fire January 16, fighting with the Tamil Tigers had been escalating over the last two years.

The Sri Lankan government blamed the Tamil Tigers for a January 8 roadside bombing that killed a government minister, the first time in 19 months that a top-ranking official was killed.

Last November the Tamil guerrilla group said its most prominent international representative, S.P. Tamilselvan, was killed in a Sri Lankan air force bombing along with five other leaders of the group.

According to the Sri Lankan defense ministry, more than 4,800 people—civilians, government soldiers, and Tamil Tigers—have been killed in fighting since December 2005.

In an interview on the Indian television station NDTV, President Rajapaksa hinted that the government's new proposal to isolate the Tamil Tigers includes trying to revive a 1987 accord with New Delhi under which India sent thousands of troops to fight the Tamil Tigers, the January 13 *Hindustan Times* reported. As part of that accord the Sri Lankan government amended the constitution to establish provincial councils with limited autonomy. The councils never functioned in the Tamil-speaking northeastern province.

The head of Sri Lanka's navy praised the Indian navy for its help in destroying Tamil weapons supply vessels and floating warehouses, reported NDTV. Partly to counter Pakistan's influence, India provides Sri Lanka with a broad range of military supplies, including low-flying detection radars, patrol ships, and artillery. Pakistan also provides substantial military aid to Sri Lanka and training for the country's officers.

Admiral Robert Willard, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, met with his Sri Lankan counterpart in the capital city of Colombo January 19, reported the *Asian Tribune*. The visit was a show of support by Washington for the battle against the Tamil Tigers.



# SWP candidates join struggles

Continued from front page

sanctions against employers who hire those without papers. (See front-page article). “None of the other presidential candidates has spoken out in favor of legalization of immigrant workers,” Calero said in an interview at the church with the Spanish-language TV station Univisión Indiana. “Each of them has made proposals that end up making life more difficult for immigrant workers here in this country, from the building of a wall to supporting measures like denying immigrant workers the right to a driver’s license to be able to work and carry out their daily lives.”

Calero urged all workers to participate in demonstrations for the legalization of immigrant workers and in opposition to raids and deportations.

Campaigning the following day in Chicago, Calero was joined by Illinois Socialist Workers congressional candidates John Hawkins and Dennis Richter at a shift change at the A. Lava and Son mattress factory, on the city’s South Side. Several workers stopped to talk and took campaign flyers. A sewing machine operator told Calero she had helped to organize workers from the plant to join last year’s May 1 immigrant rights march. “I’m getting ready for this May Day,” she said.

Calero was the featured speaker at a January 20 campaign event at the Militant Labor Forum hall here. Among those attending were two former workers from the American Packing Corp., a hog slaughterhouse that shut down in 2001. Former AMPAC workers are still fighting for back pay and benefits lost after the company shut down operations without giving them the legally mandated 60-day notice. A trial starts January 23 in federal court here on a class-action suit filed by the workers. Calero and supporters of the socialist campaign are joining the workers at the court hearing.

At the forum Calero also spoke with two fighters for justice for Freddie Wilson, who was killed by the Chicago police. Calero later met with others involved in the fight against police brutality at the home of Carol Montgomery, grandmother of Steve Womack. She and others have been demanding an investigation of the role of the Chicago police in his death in a car crash in March 2007.

At the campaign forum Calero urged participants to read, discuss, and share the recently published Socialist Workers Party campaign platform with others, and to invite the socialist candidates to join the struggles they are involved in.

Two youth in attendance signed up to get involved in the campaign after a presentation by Maura DeLuca, who is active in the Young Socialists for Calero and Kennedy.

“It was great to hear a presidential candidate speak in clear and realistic terms about immigration, starting with the rights of workers. I also like the proposal to get the troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan immediately,” said Omar Hester, a 26-year old graduate student at Western Illinois University, after the event.



BY ELLEN BRICKLEY

MIAMI, January 22—Socialist Workers candidates and their supporters in Miami participated in several Martin

Luther King Day events this weekend.

Margaret Trowe, a sewing machine operator who is the Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress in the 17th District, campaigned at the Martin Luther King Day festival in Miami Gardens, which 1,000 people attended.

“We think workers need their own party,” Trowe told a group that gathered as she soap boxed. “With the slowdown in the economy, thousands of workers have lost their jobs. At the same time, prices are rising—you need to carry \$50 to fill your gas tank and \$20 to go to the corner store.

“What we need is cost-of-living increases for all wages to compensate for inflation, and a shorter workweek with no cut in pay to spread the work around and ensure jobs for all,” she said.

“All the Democratic and Republican candidates represent the wealthy capitalists. They won’t help working people defend ourselves from the economic crisis,” she said, noting that their “solutions” will be at workers’ expense. “We need a party that is based on fighting unions.”

Some people expressed concern about the economy and property taxes. Trowe replied, “The socialist campaign calls for one tax only—a steeply graduated income tax that begins above working-class household income and taxes the income of the wealthy.”

Dozens bought the *Militant* contain-



Militant/ Ellen Brickley

Left, Margaret Trowe, SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in Florida’s 17th Congressional District, campaigns at Martin Luther King event in Miami January 19.

ing the SWP platform and several contributed to the campaign.

## Support Cuban Revolution

Republican presidential candidate John McCain spent the King holiday in Miami’s Little Havana. He emphasized his experience as an officer in the U.S. Navy and his opposition to the Cuban Revolution.

Trowe explained the SWP campaign supports Cuba’s socialist revolution. She called it an example of the political road working people need to take in the United States—building a revolutionary movement that can take power and establish a workers and farmers government.

Omari Musa, the socialist candidate

for mayor of Miami-Dade County, campaigned at the Florida City King Day festival. Florida City/Homestead is an Everglades agricultural community 40 miles south of Miami. The socialist campaigners met a labor organizer who has been active in the fight to organize the 360 housekeepers, gardeners, and other workers in the exclusive community of Fisher Island, near Miami.

The next day the socialist canvassers participated in a “honk and wave” event marking the 35th anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decision, *Roe v. Wade*, that decriminalized abortion.

Musa also campaigned at the Martin Luther King Day parade in Liberty City, Miami’s largest Black community.

# Prices jump, workers’ real wages decline

Continued from front page

reach for millions, rose by 10.1 percent. Even the cost of funerals increased, by 5 percent.

According to Department of Labor statistics, real wages—that is, taking into account inflation—dropped by 0.9 percent in 2007, the fourth decline in five years.

Recent reports confirmed that December was the weakest holiday shopping season in five years. Sales fell across the board, from big chains like Target to higher-end stores like Nordstrom.

More than 1 million homes went into foreclosure in the first three quarters of 2007, according to RealtyTrac, a California firm that releases monthly figures. Another 1.8 million home loans made to borrowers with little or no credit are due to “reset” to higher rates this year and next, signaling that the current wave of foreclosures has not yet passed.

Auto loans are also contributing to the increase in personal debt. The average amount drivers owe on their cars has ballooned—up 40 percent in the last decade to \$30,738.

Citigroup, one of the largest banking and credit-card firms in the United States, has announced that it is now building its loan-loss reserves in anticipation of a possible unraveling of auto loan and credit card debt. At the same time the bank is tightening credit card lending standards.

## Bush ‘stimulus’ plan

Pointing to the instability in the housing and financial markets, the Bush administration announced it is working to enact a \$140 billion economic “stimulus” package.

The plan, similar in many ways to

those proposed by the leading Democratic presidential candidates, is based on income tax relief directed at the middle class and workers as well as tax incentives for business investment.

Speaking at a lawn-mower factory in Maryland January 19, President Bush told the owner, “I’m proud to be with your workers . . . And if they get a little more money in their pocket as a result of the growth package, it will help make sure this economy continues to grow.”

That assumes that the money will be spent on consumer goods, rather than saved or used to pay off debts.

“In 2001, Bush and Congress instituted a huge stimulus program, sending out billions,” John Mauldin, a hedge fund manager and financial analyst, wrote January 18. “Academic studies found that most of that money went into savings, which is hardly a stimulus. Further, we are in far worse credit shape now than then. How much of the \$150 billion would be spent to pay down credit card debt?”

## Financial crisis

The world financial crisis that lies behind the worsening economy is deepening. For years personal debts, including for homes, cars, and credit cards, were bundled together and sold like stocks, becoming a lucrative and growing form of speculation for giant banks, investment firms, hedge funds, and others. Now many are beginning to come to grips with the fact that a sizable amount of this paper is worthless.

In the fourth quarter of last year, Merrill Lynch and Citigroup wrote off \$16.7 billion and \$18 billion, respectively, in assets on their balance sheets. These huge losses are linked to the unraveling

mortgage market.

In addition, the credit crisis wiped out most of the fourth-quarter earnings for two major U.S. banks, Bank of America and Wachovia.

“Our modern shadow banking system craftily dodges the reserve requirements of traditional institutions and promotes a chain letter, pyramid scheme of leverage, based in many cases on no reserve cushion whatsoever. Financial derivatives of all descriptions are involved,” William Gross, director of PIMCO, a giant bond trader, wrote in January.

The worldwide holdings of derivatives reached \$516 trillion in 2007. Derivatives are contracts that are traded like stocks whose value is determined by bets on the changes in the value of one or more underlying assets such as stocks, bonds, currency, or commodities.

Gross pointed out that one shaky category of debt-based derivatives called credit default swaps, accounted for \$43 trillion as of last year—“more than half the size of the entire asset base of the global banking system.”

As these speculative schemes unravel, the big-business media is more openly voicing worries held by a section of the capitalist class that the economy is headed for a deep recession.

“The U.S. has suffered recessions only twice in the past quarter century and both were short and mild. There are good reasons to fear that the looming recession, if it arrives, could be worse,” wrote *Wall Street Journal* columnist Justin Lahart January 21. “Housing is in the midst of its worst downturn since at least the 1970s . . . The combination of heavy debt loads, still-high energy and food prices and a weakening job market has households tightening their belts.”